

JIM THORPE BOROUGH COUNCIL MEETING
December 14, 2023
MINUTES

Meeting called to order at 6:30 p.m. by President Strubinger with the pledge of allegiance and a moment of silence for the armed forces, first responders, and their families, as well as the service members who lost their lives while serving our country, and the Borough Treasurer Mia Seblin and her family.

Roll Call of Members

Gregory Strubinger	Joanne Klitsch	Jay Miller
Michael Yeastedt	Bob Schaninger	Tom Chapman-absent
Michael Rivkin	Solicitor Nanovic	Secretary Klotz
Police Chief Schatz	Borough Manager Sterner	Mayor Sofranko

Mayor's Report

Mayor Sofranko asked if there were any questions about the Police Report.

Mayor Sofranko announced he submitted a letter of resignation effective December 28, 2023 at 12:01 a.m. He was elected to serve as a County Commissioner effective January 2, 2024 and is unable to hold more than one elected office. He thanked Jay Miller, who was on Borough Council when he first started in 1990, his family, Chief Schatz, Community Watch, all Borough Council members past and present, Manager Sterner and the rest of the administrative staff, and the residents.

Announcements

Sydney Wernett was elected into one of the 4-year Council seats, as well as the 2-year Council seat. She has chosen to accept the 4-year seat and decline the 2-year seat. The 2-year seat is the remainder of Tommy Highland's seat that Michael Rivkin was appointed to fill until the next election, which took place in November. The Borough will be accepting letters of interest for the 2-year seat. If anyone is interested, please submit your letters as soon as possible.

Greg Strubinger thanked the various food stand participants, sponsors, and volunteers for everything they did to make the 2nd Annual Festival of Trees a success.

There is a vacancy on the International Property Maintenance Board. Any interested resident should submit their letter of interest to the Borough office.

Thank you to the Fairview Social Club and Frontline Graphics for their donation to the Police Department. The Police recently started a bike program with 2 e-bikes that were donated to them and the donation from the Fairview and Frontline Graphics will go towards the e-bikes.

The 2024 Commission and Board representative openings are as followed: Planning Commission 4-year term, Planning Commission 4-year term, Zoning Hearing Board 5-year term, Shade Tree Commission 5-year term, Civil Service Commission 6-year term, International Property Maintenance Board 5-year term, Vacancy Board 1 year term, Library Board 1 year term, Lehigh Canal Recreation Representative 1 year term, and Carbon County Communications Representative 1 year term. Any resident interested in these seats should submit a letter of interest to the Borough office no later than December 22nd.

Greg Strubinger read and awarded a Proclamation to Mayor Sofranko. Joanne Klitsch thanked the Mayor for all his years of service to the Borough. She and Greg Strubinger awarded Mayor Sofranko with a key to the Borough. Senator Argall, Representative Heffley, and Commissioner Nothstein all presented Proclamations to Mayor Sofranko.

Greg Strubinger read Mayor Sofranko's resignation letter. **MOTION** by Mike Yeastedt, second by Bob Schaninger to **accept Mayor Sofranko's resignation effective December 28, 2023 at 12:01 a.m.** There were no comments. Motion carries 6-0.

Public Comment

Chris VanDine – He explained that Palmer Township currently has a program benefiting veterans and would like to discuss it with Borough Council to hopefully start a similar program in Jim Thorpe.

William Miller – He was at the meeting to propose an idea for a pedestrian bridge to help with pedestrian traffic in the downtown area.

Bob Schaninger – He thanked the residents and Borough Council, Louis Hall from the Planning Commission, Mark and Dee Reitz from the Shade Tree Committee for everything they have done to make his time on Borough Council a great experience. He explained that he has taught driving classes for Jim Thorpe kids for free and he also teaches CDL classes for free. He is currently working with other municipalities training their workers to obtain their CDL's. Greg Strubinger thanked Bob.

Greg Strubinger announced the Fire Department finally received the Rescue Pumper. Borough Council wanted to show the new truck to the residents, but it's too dark prior to meeting start time. The plan will be to show the new truck to the residents in the Spring. He thanked Jay Miller and Mike Yeastedt for their assistance in obtaining the two new fire trucks.

Public Hearing

NONE

SALDO (Subdivision and Land Development Ordinance)

NONE

Action

MOTION by Bob Schaninger, second by Mike Yeastedt for **a yearly lease for two parking spaces at \$60.00 a piece along the Switchback for the property owners who live at 35 Packer Hill.** The initial proposed lease agreement to the property owners was for three parking spaces and a space for their shed at \$60.00 per space for a total of \$240.00. The property owners attended last week's Work Session meeting and explained they would be taking down the shed and would only need two parking spaces. They had asked Borough Council for either a 6-month lease agreement or a month-to-month agreement. Motion carries 6-0.

MOTION by Jay Miller, second by Mike Yeastedt to **continue using Brown & Brown as the Borough's insurance brokers.** In attendance to discuss an insurance proposal for 2024 was Rick from the Seltzer Group. He explained the insurance proposed would be through MRM, which is a trust specifically for municipalities. The difference between their insurance coverage and what the Borough currently has is MRM pays out dividends based on loss ratios. Most municipalities start seeing money back (dividends) after year two. Each municipality has the potential to earn up to 60% money back, with most averaging between 40 and 50 percent. Solicitor Nanovic asked if the Borough would initially sign up for the insurance, are they able to back out of it at anytime. Rick explained there is a 90-day period where the Borough can get out of the contract. He also explained MRM can increase insurance coverage as needed. Paul and Pat from Brown and Brown were also in attendance to discuss Brown & Brown's insurance proposal. They thanked the Borough for the many years they have been clients. Brown and Brown shops around for the best possible coverage. They explained that it takes years to start receiving dividends and that there is no guarantee the Borough will ever receive them. The insurance policy proposed by Brown & Brown is not like what is being offered by the Seltzer Group. The premiums are lower and no dividend are paid out. Brown & Brown's proposal includes heart and lung coverage, whereas the Seltzer Group's proposal does not. There are also differences in coverage between the two companies proposals. Greg Strubinger, Jay Miller, and Mike Yeastedt said they would like to see the Borough stay with Brown & Brown. There was a roll call vote:

Joanne Klitsch – yes
Jay Miller – yes
Mike Yeastedt – yes
Bob Schaninger – yes
Tom Chapman – yes
Michael Rivkin – yes
Greg Strubinger – yes
Motion carries 6-0.

MOTION by Joanne Klitsch, second by Mike Yeastedt to **approve Council Meeting Minutes from October 25, 2023.** There were no comments. Motion carries 6-0.

MOTION by Joanne Klitsch, second by Mike Yeastedt to **approve Council Meeting Minutes from November 1, 2023.** There were no comments. Motion carries 6-0.

MOTION by Joanne Klitsch, second by Mike Yeastedt to **approve Council Meeting Minutes from November 2, 2023.** There were no comments. Motion carries 6-0.

MOTION by Joanne Klitsch, second by Mike Yeastedt to **approve Council Meeting Minutes from November 9, 2023.** There were no comments. Motion carries 6-0.

MOTION by Jay Miller, second by Mike Yeastedt to **approve Expenditures from all Funds as presented.** There were no comments. Motion carries 6-0.

MOTION by Jay Miller, second by Mike Yeastedt to **approve the Treasurer's Report.** There were no comments. Motion carries 6-0.

MOTION by Jay Miller, second by Mike Yeastedt to **approve the 2024 Budgets.** There will be a .64 millage tax increase to the General Fund, a 2% increase in Sewer billing, a 5.75% increase in Water billing, and a 106.4% increase in Garbage billing. Motion carries 6-0.

MOTION by Jay Miller, second by Mike Yeastedt to **approve Ordinance 2023-06 Tax Levy Ordinance for Fiscal Year 2024.** There is an increase of .64 mills. Motion carries 6-0.

MOTION by Jay Miller, second by Bob Schaninger to **approve Ordinance 2023-07 Zoning.** There were no comments. Motion carries 6-0.

MOTION by Mike Yeastedt, second by Joanne Klitsch to **authorize the Solicitor to readvertise amending the Vehicle and Traffic Ordinance for no parking on the west side of Reservoir Road.** After discussing amending the Ordinance for no parking along Reservoir Road, a resident who lives along there and does not have off street parking asked if the section in front of his house be eligible for street parking. Chief Schatz recommended trying no parking only on one side of Reservoir Road. Motion carries 6-0.

MOTION by Mike Yeastedt, second by Bob Schaninger to **approve Resolution 2023-20 Housing Unit Numbering – 312 School Street.** This is a requirement by the County and 911 for any properties that do not already have a housing number assigned to them. Motion carries 6-0.

MOTION by Bob Schaninger, second by Mike Yeastedt to **approve Employee 164's request for Family Medical Leave.** This would be unpaid and only for the remainder of the 2023 year. Motion carries 6-0.

MOTION by Bob Schaninger, second by Joanne Klitsch to **offer employment to Applicant #2122 for the position of Sewer Division Full Time Truck Driver/Laborer/Licensed Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator Trainee conditioned upon the Employee obtaining a Sewer Operator Class C and E, Subclasses 1 and 4 License within 3 years of date of hire for this position and obtaining a CDL Class B**

driver's license within 1 year of date of hire for this position; drug and alcohol testing will be required upon obtaining CDL. There were no comments. Motion carries 6-0.

MOTION by Mike Yeastedt, second by Bob Schaninger to **advertise for the End of the Year Meeting for December 27, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. in Memorial Hall.** There were no comments. Motion carries 6-0.

MOTION by Mike Yeastedt, second by Bob Schaninger to **advertise for the January Jim Thorpe Borough Council Meetings for January 2, 4, 11, 2023 at 6:30 p.m. in Memorial Hall.** There were no comments. Motion carries 6-0.

MOTION by Michael Rivkin, second by Joanne Klitsch to **table Main Street – Leisure Lane Association until the January Borough Council meeting.** Michael Rivkin explained he has a few more questions that he would like answers to before coming to a decision. Motion carries 6-0.

MOTION by Bob Schaninger, second by Mike Yeastedt to **approve the Lion's Club to a 2-year extension managing the Asa Packer Mansion operations conditioned upon continuing open communication with Borough Council and working on an updated agreement.** Jay McElmoyle was there on behalf of the Lion's Club and spoke about all of the things the Lion's Club has done to and for the mansion. The Lion's Club is looking to hire a Director/Curator for the mansion. Michael Rivkin asked what would be the job description of the Director/Curator. Greg Strubinger said that the current agreement in place does not have a term limit in place for the Lion's Club operating the mansion. Jay McElmoyle said he would like to work out an updated agreement with the Borough over the next six months. Motion carries 6-0.

MOTION by Bob Schaninger, second by Mike Yeastedt to **approve JTTA's 2024 Winterfest Event request.** The days Winterfest would take place would be on February 17 and 18, 2024 and music would be in Josiah White Park. Council expressed concern about car and pedestrian traffic and parking. Council asked about the train schedule and how it would affect the downtown area that weekend. Council expressed the need to limit the number of festivals and the lengths of some of them due to the effect they are having on the Borough and its resources. Jay Miller expressed the need of a Parking Authority to help alleviate many of the issues the Borough is currently experiencing. Motion carries 6-0.

MOTION by Mike Yeastedt, second by Bob Schaninger to **approve Cub Pack 138's request for use of Memorial Hall on December 17, 2023 for their holiday party, February 18, 2024 for their Blue & Gold party, and March 10, 2024 for their Pinewood Derby.** Due to possible construction to Memorial Hall starting next year, it was recommended they come up with an alternative location for their event dates in 2024. Motion carries 6-0.

MOTION by Mike Yeastedt, second by Bob Schaninger to **approve Entech Engineering EWO -- LSL Inventory Phase I deadline extension.** The extension would be through March 31, 2024. Motion carries 6-0.

MOTION by Jay Miller, second by Mike Yeastedt to **approve Entech Engineering EWO – WTP NPDES Permit Renewal totaling \$5,200.00.** There were no comments. Motion carries 6-0.

MOTION by Jay Miller, second by Joanne Klitsch to **approve Entech Engineering EWO – 2023 Chapter 94 Report totaling \$3,200.00.** There were no comments. Motion carries 6-0.

MOTION by Jay Miller, second by Mike Yeastedt to **approve Spillman Farmer Invoice 8122.22.12 totaling \$614.41 for the Memorial Hall Project.** There were no comments. Motion carries 6-0.

MOTION by Jay Miller, second by Mike Yeastedt to **approve Spillman Farmer Invoice 8121.22.11 totaling \$303.81 for the Public Service Garage Project.** There were no comments. Motion carries 6-0.

MOTION by Jay Miller, second by Joanne Klitsch to **approve Account #4390 Payment Plan.** There were no comments. Motion carries 6-0.

MOTION by Jay Miller, second by Mike Yeastedt to **approve Account #5213 Payment Plan**. There were no comments. Motion carries 6-0.

MOTION by Jay Miller, second by Mike Yeastedt to **approve Utility Accounts Proposed Updates**. There were no comments. Motion carries 6-0.

Exonerations

MOTION by Jay Miller, second by Mike Yeastedt to **approve the monthly Exoneration Report**. There were no comments. Motion carries 6-0.

Committees

Administration

NONE

Public Service

NONE

Police

NONE

Buildings/Parks

NONE

Emergency Services

Jay Miller gave information to Mike Yeastedt about getting an exhaust removal system for both fire houses. Currently, whenever the fire trucks are started in the fire houses, there is no where for the exhaust fumes to escape. He asked that Borough Council look into this for next year.

Old Business

NONE

Executive Session

MOTION by Mike Yeastedt, second by Jay Miller to **move into executive session for personnel and litigation**. There were no comments. Motion carries 6-0. The meeting paused at 8:40 p.m.

MOTION by Jay Miller, second by Michal Rivkin to **resume the meeting**. There were no comments. Motion carries 6-0. The meeting resumed at 9:08 p.m.

MOTION by Jay Miller, second by Michael Rivkin to **accept Frank Lorah's letter of resignation from the Fire Department**. There were no comments. Motion carries 6-0.

Adjourn

MOTION by Mike Yeastedt, second by Jay Miller to **adjourn the meeting**. There were no comments. Motion carries 6-0. The meeting ended at 9:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Brooke Klotz
Borough Secretary